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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000702

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: TSVANGIRAI ON EUROPE TRIP, NEXT STEPS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Eric T. Schultz under Section 1

Summary

¶1. (C) In a June 11 meeting with the Charge, MDC anti-senate faction President Morgan Tsvangirai said he made important progress in refurbishing the faction's relationships with donors and the diaspora during a European tour earlier in the month. The opposition leader reiterated the faction's commitment to what he saw as mutually reinforcing strategies of contesting elections and pressing the regime with non-violent civil resistance. Rebuffing criticism from MDC MP David Coltart over intra-party violence, he attributed violence in Zimbabwe to a culture of ruling party oppression and the absence of rule of law. End summary.

Europe Tour a Success

¶2. (C) Tsvangirai cast his tour of the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium as largely successful. Principally, his faction overcame "demonization" efforts by the rival pro-senate faction and ZANU-PF and allayed concerns at foreign ministries and among NGO partners about intra-party violence. He said the faction also built important relationships with the diaspora, including at two energetic and well-attended rallies in the UK.

¶3. (C) Tsvangirai said his engagement with audiences in Europe revolved largely around his faction's refurbishment in the wake of factional splintering last October. In this regard, he highlighted three "benchmarks" that indicated the anti-senate faction's vitality: a successful Congress,

productive post-Congress planning and restructuring, and the Budiriro by-election victory. He agreed with the Charge that the faction had "held serve" in Budiriro, where it was under considerable pressure to retain its own seat. Other themes he pursued with European audiences included the country's economic meltdown and the need for continued resoluteness by the international community against the regime.

¶4. (C) The former labor leader said that many Europeans, notably the Norwegians and the Dutch, were skeptical, especially about the impact of the splintering. "If the MDC couldn't dislodge ZANU-PF united, how can it do so divided? Can't ZANU-PF players be enticed to the democratic side? Why shouldn't we support both factions? Haven't we heard this action plan all before?" In response, Tsvangirai said he acknowledged that the faction's roadmap echoed action plans of the past but it had learned from its experiences and its performance would improve. He had no problem with a multiplicity of parties but stressed that co-existence with the pro-Senate faction did not imply cooperation for the time being. For now, reflecting the popular will, his faction would continue its focus on ZANU-PF. In that regard, he said time was on the opposition's side in view of the ruling party's propensity for unpopular and self-destructive policies.

Fund-raising, Budget, Action Priorities

¶5. (C) Responding to the Charge's queries on fund-raising, Tsvangirai maintained that the trip had been "very useful,

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very timely" with European donors and the diaspora. He

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elaborated that donors, particularly the Nordics, seemed inclined to support the faction's activities in the long term, but short-term funds remained a challenge. He agreed with the Charge that faction treasurer Roy Bennett's presence in South Africa, where he has applied for asylum, was a powerful potential asset for the faction with the diaspora.

¶6. (C) Tsvangirai continued that the faction was revisiting its budget priorities. Specifically, it would revise its budget to focus more on the short-term -- the next three to four months. The budget reprioritization would seek to advance a series of objectives in this context: identify weaknesses in regime pillars of support; rejuvenate local structures/activities; engage with civic society, particularly with view to a church-convened meeting of democratic forces; pursue mobilization strategies; advance a communications strategy; develop action plan for civil resistance; establish program of outreach/negotiation with President Mugabe.

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Elections and Civil Action Mutually Reinforcing
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¶7. (C) Queried by the Charge about perceptions that the faction was steering from a pledged "winter of discontent" to an election-oriented path to power, Tsvangirai stressed that the party remained firmly committed to an activist platform. He said that the faction's roadmap called for mutually reinforcing prongs of election participation and non-violent public pressure for change. Importantly, elections were part of the resistance campaign in offering the opposition a mobilization venue and giving voice to popular dissatisfaction with the regime. Similarly, the numerous and regular public rallies he had been holding had also been part of the party's Q&resistance.Q8

¶8. (C) Tsvangirai reported that the party was conducting rallies relentlessly, and expected to have completed rallies

in all 120 constituencies within the next two to three weeks.

The rallies were important confidence-building exercises that developed momentum for more forceful action later. He himself would spend the next weekend engaged in "constituency exchanges" in Bulawayo's seven constituencies. Involving more give-and-take than rallies, the exchanges would serve to solidify the faction's rapport and credentials in Matabeleland, one of the MDC's traditional strongholds.

Response to Coltart

¶9. (C) In response to the Charge's inquiry about MDC MP David Coltart's charges that intra-party violence had been directed by some within the anti-senate faction, Tsvangirai said the party had no institutional mechanisms to pursue violence and was itself the principal victim of political violence in Zimbabwe. Political violence existed in Zimbabwe because of state-sponsored violence against his party and had been exacerbated by the break down of the rule of law.

¶10. (C) Tsvangirai added that Coltart's accountability themes were ironic in view of his own failure to account for much of the donor funds for the party that Coltart had received before the MDC splintered. Tsvangirai also said Coltart had been with the Mutambara faction "from the start" and should no longer pretend to be an impartial arbiter between the factions. He asserted that Coltart was trying to provoke a self-serving public debate into which he refused to

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be drawn. In that regard, he agreed with the Charge that prolonged public internecine combat between the two factions would only play into ZANU-PF's hands.

Comment

¶11. (C) Tsvangirai's faction appears to be developing momentum, primarily through the successful series of rallies it has held, and has strengthened its position in the past three months vis-Q-vis both its rival faction and the ruling party. Given that momentum and the continuing meltdown of the economy, Tsvangirai seems in no hurry to launch overt anti-regime actions. While he may be concerned about the appearance of not delivering on earlier pledges to take such action, this course may prove wiser in the long run. Indeed, among those most interested in goading him into premature action may be the ruling party itself, which might prefer to see polarizing incidents it can control -- for now -- before pressures build to more unmanageable levels.

SCHULTZ